

## Toni Ashley – Compassionate and Courageous

My Hoosier Heroine is Toni Ashley. Toni is a native of Evansville, Indiana, but spent the majority of her life in Mt. Carmel, Illinois. She earned her degree in nursing from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and in 2003 she returned to Evansville to work as a nurse in the Neo-Natal ICU at Deaconess Hospital. I chose Toni as my Hoosier Heroine because she always puts others before herself and is constantly looking for the opportunity to serve others.

Toni has inspired me to serve others with a heart of compassion and love. She has been on several mission trips to Myanmar where she provides medical care for kids in an orphanage, widows, and people in the surrounding village. She and her team set up a medical clinic and not only provide services, but also teach the people basic medical care for emergencies. Toni leaves her family every year for weeks at a time to travel over 8,000 miles to care for people that she has never even met.

One time, while in Myanmar, Toni was faced with a difficult situation. She was in the clinic one day when a young boy rushed in with a cut that needed immediate care. The doctor was unavailable so she was faced with the decision of whether or not to sew the boy up on her own. She decided to step up and with great composure, suture the cut even though she had no previous experience. I am a leader on my soccer team and Toni's courage inspires me to never back down from a challenge.

I am also inspired by Toni's love and compassion towards people. At her job, she cares for babies who were either born prematurely or with very serious illnesses. However, she must not only focus on their needs, but the needs of terrified and sometimes grieving parents. Toni shows compassion and sensitivity to them and that sets the bar for my goal to do the same.

Another great example that Toni sets for me to follow is her devotion to God. I cannot remember a week that Toni did not come to her small group Bible study with my parents or didn't go to church. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I am called to come and experience fellowship with other Christians. Sometimes I just feel like sleeping in instead of getting up to go to church. But when I think about the dedication that I am to have to my faith and to God, I remember that I need to go and that going will only benefit myself and the people around me. Toni is my reminder that I should never neglect the opportunities that I am given to grow as a daughter of God and I could not appreciate that more.

Through the course of our lives, we meet thousands of people, yet only a few will impact us in a positive and lasting way. Toni is one of those people for me, and I'm sure there are many others who feel the same. She is selfless, compassionate, godly, and so much more. She gives up her time to serve others, shows love for people she doesn't even know, and sets a remarkable example for everyone who she meets. If there is one lady that I want to grow up and emulate, it is Toni Ashley and that is why she is my Hoosier Heroine.